

Conference Presentation Abstract

Title:

Canine Potential Unleashed: An Old Dog Teaches New Tricks

Primary Author:

Rebecca Swift-Weir, Brain Injury Services Muskoka Simcoe (Barrie)

Summary:

Exploring the Potential for the Use of Service Dogs in Acquired Brain Injury Rehabilitation:

Service animals are commonly used to assist persons with disabilities and to promote independence. The unconditional acceptance that dogs provide can be a powerful tool in motivating participants to work toward their goals. Animal-assisted interventions (AAI) are designed to improve the physical, social, emotional, and cognitive functioning of the participant, as well as provide educational and motivational effectiveness for participants. In this presentation audience members will learn about the facility dog program at Brain Injury Services Muskoka Simcoe (BIS). Through the Independence Training and Day Programs at BIS, participants have the opportunity to work with a fully trained service dog. Creemore, a six year old golden retriever works with participants on their goals in areas including communication, assertiveness, self esteem, planning and organization and more. Examples and scenarios of sessions will be presented and workshop participants will have the opportunity for hands on activities with the dog.

Learning Objectives:

The presentation will outline the program currently in place at BIS and, through anecdotal reports from participants, explore the effectiveness of using a facility dog in ABI rehabilitation. Workshop participants will explore how rehabilitation professionals can utilize the power of canine assisted interventions to assist participants in reaching their goals.